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Official public comment to the DOE on its Draft Environmental Impact Statement for a Geologic Repository for the Disposal of Spent Nuclear Fuel and High-Level Radioactive Waste at Yucca Mountain, Nye County, Nevada (DOE/EIS-0250-D)

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- 1 [This plan to ship high-level radioactive waste across the country for ~~25~~ 24 years deserves careful consideration. While it is true that something has to be done with the waste, it doesn't have to be done immediately. Industry experts say that most of the waste could remain at the reactor sites where it is now stored for ~~as long as~~ a hundred years.]

The half lives of some of these elements (24,000 years for plutonium, 710,000 for uranium) are several times the length of human civilization. The effects of a mistake made in haste now could be with us for a very long time.

- 2 As the DOE knows, [Yucca Mountain is a poor site for long-term storage, partly because of the rapid movement of water through the ground, which would corrode the underground metal containers and wash the waste into the ground water, creating a sacrifice zone for a very long time.]
- 3 [You can change the regulations so that it is legal to bury the waste there, but it won't change the fact that it would be a sacrifice zone. It may be that Yucca Mountain will be eliminated as a long-term repository site in favor of a better one. In that case, the waste would have to be moved again. We're in too big a rush.]

~~One effect of shipping the waste to temporary storage at Yucca Mountain would be to increase the desirability of Yucca Mountain as a long-term repository site. It would be a fait accompli, with the waste right there and easy to deal with. Are such cynical calculations part of the reason for moving the waste now?~~

One of the components of the waste is plutonium, the most poisonous substance on earth. It is produced inside nuclear reactors, about 500 pounds a year from a 1000 megawatt power plant. And it only takes an atom or two to give you cancer. We don't know what to do with poisons like this. This problem will continue to get worse as long as we produce plutonium and the like in nuclear power plants. Moving the waste out of the more populous East to Nevada makes a lot of political sense. It also takes the pressure off the nuclear power industry, making it easier and cheaper to continue producing plutonium and the like, making more sacrifice zones inevitable.